

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
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FOLLOWING REPEAT CALCUTTA 1959 SENT ACTION NEW DELHI
INFO DACCA/BOMBAY/MADRAS. DTD 20 AUG 75

QUOTE:

CALCUTTA 1959

E.O. 11652 GDS
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, BG, IN, US
SUBJ: REACTION IN CALCUTTA TO THE BANGLADESH COUP

1. REACTION OF PEOPLE IN WEST BENGAL TO BANGLADESH COUP HAS BEEN UNIVERSAL CONCERN AND SORROW OVER DEATH OF SHEIKH MUJIB. WE HAVE YET TO HEAR--OR TO HEAR OF--ANYONE SAYING THE COUP WAS A GOOD THING, THOUGH SOME HERE DO RECOGNIZE THAT MUJIB HAD MADE MISTAKES. HINDU BENGALIS OF COURSE FEAR THAT THE NEW REGIME WILL BE MORE ISLAMIC THAN THE PREVIOUS ONE AND THAT THE HINDUS OF BANGLADESH WILL BE PERSECUTED AND SEEK REFUGE HERE. PEOPLE SEEM A LITTLE REASSURED BY PRESS REPORTS THAT ALL IS QUIET IN BANGLADESH AND THAT THE NEW REGIME IS NOT

CALLING THE COUNTRY AN QTE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC UNQTE, BUT NOT MUCH. MOST SEEM TO EXPECT TROUBLE BETWEEN MOSLEMS AND HINDUS IN BANGLADESH IN THE PERIOD AHEAD. THESE FEELINGS ARE BEING AIRED ONLY PRIVATELY, NOT IN THE PRESS, APPARENTLY BECAUSE THE AUTHORITIES HAVE ISSUED INSTRUCTIONS AGAINST PRESS COMMENT OR
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REPORTING ON POSSIBLE COMMUNAL STRIFE.

2. THE USG, THE CIA SPECIFICALLY, SEEMS TO BE SEEN BY MOST PEOPLE HERE AS BEHIND THE COUP, BUT THERE IS A CERTAIN DICHOTOMY IN WHAT WE HEAR ON THIS. MOST PEOPLE WITH WHOME CONGEN AMERICAN OFFICERS HAVE SPOKEN SAY THEY REALIZE THE CHARGES OF USG AND/OR CIA INVOLVEMENT ARE NONSENSE, BUT, THEY SAY, ONE HAS TO EXPECT THAT THE DEMAGOGUES WILL ACCUSE THE US AND THAT THE IGNORANT MULTITUDES WILL BELIEVE THEM. ON THE OTHER HAND, OUR LOCAL EMPLOYEES (BOTH CONGEN POLITICAL LOCALS AND SENIOR USUS LOCALS) TELL US THAT ALMOST ALL THE POEPL E THEY TALK WITH THINK THE COUP WAS THE WORK OF THE USG, SOME SAY IN COOPERATION WITH PAKISTAN OR CHINA. MOST LIKELY THE REACTION THAT OUR LOCALS ARE GETTING IS THE AUTHENTIC ONE.

3. THE CPI HAS BEEN HOLDING RALLIES ALL AROUND TOWN AND HAS MANAGED TO GET CONGRESS JOINT SPONSORSHIP OR AT LEAST PARTICIPATION BY CONGRESS FIGURES IN MOST OF THEM. THESE ARE INEVITABLY FORA FOR SPEECHES ACCUSING THE CIA OF HAVING ASSASSINATED MUJIB AND ENGINEERED THE COUP AND US IMPERIALISM OF WANTING TO QTE DESTABILIZE UNQTE THE SUBCONTINENT. TWO SUCH TOOK PLACE ON AUGUST 18; AT ONE OF THEM WEST BENGAL CONGRESS PRESIDENT ARUN MAITRA, ACCORDING TO THE PRESS, SPOKE OF QTE THE MACHINATIONS OF THE REACTION UNQTE AND SAID QTE THE FORCES OF REACTION ARE STILL ALIVE AND ALSO EXIST IN THE CONSPIRACIES OF THEIR FRIEND, THE UNITED STATES...MUJIB WAS A VICTIM OF THESE CONSPIRACIES UNQTE (THE QUOTE IS FROM CPI DAILY KALANTUR, NOT DIRECTLY FROM MAITRA'S REMARKS). A SIMILAR RALLY HAS BEEN CALLED FOR AUGUST 21 AT THE CALCUTTA UNIVERSITY, UNDER THE SPONSORSHIP OF CPI FIGURES WITH A FEW COONGRESS AND WELL-KNOWN NON-PARTY TYPES THROWN IN FOR RESPECTABILITY.

4. ON THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL LEVEL,THE BANGLADESH COUP IS SEEN BY ALMOST EVERYBODY HERE A A SETBACK OR INDIA. MRS. GANDHI'S CRITICS TRANSLATE THIS AS A SETBACK FOR HER AND ASK RHETORICALLY --AND WISHFULLY--WHETHER HAVING MADE HERSELF A QTE DICATOR UNQTE SHE CAN'T NOW EXPECT THE SAME THING MUJIB GOT. BUT AS WE HAVE REPORTED IN EARLIER ASSESSMENTS MRS. GANDHI'S CRITICS ARE NOT THE JAMORITY HERE. THE VIEW EXPRESSED BY MOST IS THAT THE BANGLADESH COUP SHOWS THAT MRS. GANDHI DID THE RIGHT THING IN USING THE EMERGENCY POWERS; IF SHE HADN'T, SO THE REASONING GOES, THERE

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WOULD HAVE BEEN CHAOS IN INDIA AND WHAT HAPPENED IN BANGLADESH MIGHT HAVE HAPPENED HERE TOO. WE ARE TOLD THAT, FAR FROM WEAKENING MRS. GANDHI, THE BANGLADESH COUP HAS STRENGTHENED HER POSITION AND HER FOLLOWING IN WEST BENGAL AND THAT PEOPLE NOW UNDERSTAND WHY THE EMERGENCY AND ARE MORE THAN EVER READY TO GO ALONG WITH IT. THIS MAY BE A BIT OVERDONE BUT IN ANY EVENT THE BANGLADESH COUP HAS GIVEN PEOPLE HERE SOMETHING ELSE TO THINK AND WORRY ABOUT, AND TO THE EXTENT THAT IT HAS TAKEN THEIR MINDS OFF THE

EMERGENCY IT PROBABLY REPRESENTS A PLUS FOR MRS. GANDHI.

KORN

UNQUOTE.

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